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BOOK REVIEWS.

NIETZSCHE THE THINKER—A STUDY. By William Mackintire Salter. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1917. Pp. x, 539.

Everyone who is familiar with the articles upon Nietzsche which Mr. Salter has contributed to various periodicals during the last few years must welcome his completed volume as sure to contain a scholarly and impartial presentation of the teachings of this most enigmatical of thinkers. The current conception of Nietzsche's writings as one of the intellectual forces responsible for the war and for the mode in which it has been conducted by the Central Powers is naturally not conducive to the unbiased examinations of Nietzsche's theories, and Mr. Salter's study should be of great service in correcting many popular errors on the subject. There has been in the past no lack of books purporting to contain all that one needs to know about Nietzsche, the man, and Nietzsche, the philosopher; but so many have been written from a superficial knowledge, indeed, in some cases, with what seems to be wilful misrepresentation, that they are worse than useless. Many, too, confine themselves to the unimportant rather than to what is really distinctive, and so give rise to distorted ideas. It is easy to make a collection of daring aphorisms which will catch the attention and shock the reader; but at the end he knows no more of Nietzsche's philosophy than he did at the beginning. Doubtless this sort of writing appeals to its own public, but for the man who really wishes to know and who is willing to take the trouble to do some serious thinking, Mr. Salter has now provided the means of acquiring genuine knowledge. His work is by far the best that has been done in English, and ranks with the hitherto unrivalled studies of Riehl and Lichtenberger.

Nietzsche's position in the intellectual world of to-day is a curious one. Several of his striking phrases, a few of his most radical ideas, often distorted beyond recognition, have permeated every civilized country and greet one at every turn. Extravagantly lauded by his little coterie of admirers, to whom he fills the place Kant occupied for their fathers, he is there rather the center of a cult than the object of critical study. Important as he is, however, even for serious students, he does not rank, in

the writer's opinion, among the very greatest; and it hardly seems probable that Mr. Salter's prophecy will be fulfilled when he says that we shall some day be speaking of a pre-Nietzschean and a post-Nietzschean period of philosophy, and that a philosopher's position will depend upon whether or not he has reckoned with Nietzsche. Great he is, but to place him beside Kant is to give him more honor than is his due.

There has come to be a general recognition that Nietzsche's philosophical activity falls into three well marked periods, of which the third is by far the most important. Through them all there runs a common end or ideal, which Mr. Salter characterizes as religious, though he admits that the outcome would not ordinarily be called by that name. Nietzsche's nature, he thinks, was deeply reverent, and after the beliefs of his childhood had been destroyed by study, it came to be his great problem to find some mode of satisfying the instincts thus thwarted. He could live without God, but not without the godlike; and in the same way, though he felt obliged to discard Christian morality, he was equally compelled to find a substitute for it. The will to power, the superman, the supreme value and importance of a strong personality, these represent the outcome of his thinking, and are what he came to regard as the great realities.

If Mr. Salter's book can be charged with any one great fault, it is with what often seems to be an excessive sympathy with the philosophical fortunes of its subject. Just as he is at great pains to defend Nietzsche's character against adverse criticism, claiming even in the face of his own quotations that an overwhelming sense of his own importance had no place there, so he is always concerned to establish, if possible, the originality and consistency of Nietzsche's doctrines. He would have, for instance, the theory of eternal recurrence a logical necessity and an ethical postulate, but fails to point out its deterministic implications. On the contrary it has always seemed to me that the reason why Nietzsche regarded the theory as a touchstone for men was precisely because it could contain no moral stimulus. Knowing that in spite of all your futile struggles your life is determined down to the slightest detail, can you dare face the certainty that it will be repeated through all eternity? If you can, you are a Dionysiac pessimist and worthy to bring about the superman.

Mr. Salter gives at length and in some respects more clearly

and effectively than any of his predecessors the details of Nietzsche's criticism of moral obligation. For instance he insists upon Nietzsche's declaration that our present morality is a group morality and so of importance merely in relation to the group. It satisfies the average man but the thinker has gladly turned his attention elsewhere. Moreover a group morality is binding only upon the group and so cannot be extended beyond the limits of the latter. There can be no moral relationships between different nations and different societies. It is worthy of note in passing, especially because it is overlooked by most critics and is hardly made clear by Mr. Salter, that Nietzsche's famous statements concerning the moral compatibility of kindness toward members of the group, with cruelty to those outside it, all refer to the current morality. Under present circumstances such statements naturally catch the attention; but while there is nothing to show that Nietzsche would himself condemn the procedure in question, they nevertheless refer especially to the morality he has set aside.

One of the best chapters in Mr. Salter's book is the one in which he sums up the conclusions of Nietzsche's destructive criticism. Morality, in the ordinary sense of the term, has been characterized as a danger. It stands aside from the main issues of life and is even a menace to them. It weakens purpose and would like to see everybody comfortable. The higher man is warned against it. As he values his soul, he must have nothing to do with this creation of slaves. Mr. Salter is not always correct, it seems to me, in his treatment of details, but his conclusions are admirably drawn and admirably stated.

What, then, is the superman for whose sake the present moral order is to be discarded? In the answer Mr. Salter finds the revelation of Nietzsche's genius. "Nietzsche used this significant language, 'Once, when men looked on the far-stretching sea, they said God; but I teach you to say Superman.' The conceptions are in a way correlative." Nietzsche "belongs to the company of those, or of One, who said, 'be ye perfect' and set up as the standard the infinite perfection of God." "Man (as he exists) is something to be surpassed: that is his starting point." "For man as he is is not a happy throw of nature's dice; there is something fundamentally wrong with him. . . . He is tentative material merely; the failures predominate; broken fragments, ruins are what we see about us. Hence suffering is Nietzsche's main

feeling. We thirst, he says, for great and deep souls, and discover at best a social animal. Only a living, habitual sense of perfect things could beget a dissatisfaction like this."¹ Life, the highest life, is the end, and as such provides a standard that is independent of personal feeling or opinion. But though abundance of life is his *summum bonum*, Nietzsche has no sympathy with the prevailing admiration for social service. The community is not invariably higher than the individual and to be a "servant of the common life" is to destroy all chance of individual greatness. He will have no gregariousness, no common rights and common duties, no equality in any sense, but the strong personality, that rejoices in being different from other men, that finds its pleasure and its inspiration in the rare and difficult. Such men learn to set aside all the ordinary love for comfort and security; they can endure pain and want and sickness,—perhaps must do so, for they are to be a new type of saints, and no saint has ever been able entirely to dispense with asceticism.

In spite of what is at times a certain cumbrousness of expression Mr. Salter has succeeded in catching and reproducing the exalted tone of enthusiasm with which Nietzsche himself sets forth his ideal. Many critics, resting their case especially upon passages from *Also sprach Zarathustra*, have given biological significance to the theory and regarded the superman as a new species to be evolved sometime in the future. Mr. Salter, unwilling to press doubtful passages, thinks it more probable that Nietzsche gradually came to think of the superman as simply the extraordinary individual, the great personality, free from all artificial restraints and strong enough to live his own life as he chose, without regard to the demands of society.

It would take too long to go into Mr. Salter's excellent account of Nietzsche's social and political theories. They are often inconsistent, but they provide much intellectual stimulus for the reader who is not too much concerned with systematic form. One question, however, can hardly be omitted at the present time, and that is the one concerning Nietzsche's share in the responsibility for the Great War. Mr. Salter's book, he tells us, was written for the most part before the outbreak of hostilities; and though he has inserted an occasional reference to the

¹ Pp. 341-344

subject, he has purposely omitted its discussion. It is his opinion, however, that Nietzsche, instead of leading the German or even the European thought of the present, goes directly counter to its main tendencies, and that the strong feeling now existing against his very name is merely a prejudice due to ignorance of his real position. To a certain extent it seems to me that Mr. Salter is right in this respect. Nietzsche's popularity, at least in the past, has always been greater outside the German Empire than within its limits; and no one could feel less sympathy than he with the commercial and imperial aims now summed up in the first line of the famous anthem, *Deutschland über alles*. He was constantly maintaining that the Germans had no Kultur that was worthy of the name. Nevertheless I do not see how he could have failed to welcome the war, and to regard it as the one great opportunity for Germany to save her soul alive,—perhaps even as the means of acquiring the soul that he sometimes seemed to think she lacked. He greatly admired Napoleon and often cited him, together with Caesar Borgia as an historical instance of the superman. It is absurd to say that Nietzsche brought about the War, but on the other hand it is no more than the simple truth to recognize that in his theories are to be found a justification for all that his countrymen have done or may still do.

GRACE NEAL DOLSON.

ELEMENTS OF CONSTRUCTIVE PHILOSOPHY. By J. S. Mackenzie, Emeritus Professor of Logic and Philosophy, University College, Cardiff. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. New York: The Macmillan Co. Pp. 487. Price, 12s. 6d. net.

Dr. Mackenzie is heartily to be congratulated on the completion of a task which has occupied him in spite of many interruptions for upwards of a quarter of a century. He is so anxious to seek light wherever it may be found and so ready to adjust his views in order that they may reflect as much of it as possible that one can hardly avoid wondering how many drafts were cast aside in the process. The result is a volume which reflects extraordinarily well recent philosophical tendencies. Readers of Dr. Mackenzie's previous writings do not require to be told that he takes the utmost pains to make his meaning clear and assists the student with ample references to a wide range of philosophy and literature. The plan of the book is simple enough. The first part discusses certain general problems about knowledge and its relation to reality. In the second there follows a con-